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OUTGOING MESSAGE

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ITEM NO: [redacted]

DATE: 7TH MARCH 1975

SUBJECT: BRITISH POLICY ON DIEGO GARCIA

[redacted]

THE BRITISH NEWSPAPER THE GUARDIAN CLAIMS THAT BRITISH AGREEMENT FOR THE US DEVELOPMENT OF DIEGO GARCIA HAS BEEN "SUSPENDED." PRIME MINISTER HEATH, FOREIGN SECRETARY CALLAGHAN, AND DEFENSE SECRETARY MASON BELIEVE THAT THE LAW OF GOVERNMENT CANNOT CONSIDER ITSELF BOUND BY A DEAL CONCLUDED--IN CONSIDERABLE SECRECY--BY THE HEATH ADMINISTRATION. THE GOVERNMENT INTENDS TO CONDUCT A FULL RE-EXAMINATION OF THE DIEGO GARCIA AGREEMENT AND A CABINET DECISION WHETHER TO CONFIRM OR SCRAP IT WILL FOLLOW. THE PRESS ARTICLE SAYS THAT THE ODDS FAVOR THE LATTER COURSE.

A FOREIGN OFFICE SPOKESMAN, WHILE DISCOUNTING THE GUARDIAN ARTICLE SAYS THAT NO MINISTERIAL DECISION ON THE DRAFT AGREEMENT HAS BEEN MADE AND IN THAT SENSE THE AGREEMENT COULD BE CONSIDERED TO BE

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State Department review completed

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"SUSPENDED." THE SPOKESMAN ALSO SAYS THAT THERE ARE NO INDICATIONS OF WHAT THE FINAL BRITISH POLICY WILL BE, BUT THAT BOTH FOREIGN OFFICE AND DEFENSE OFFICIALS STILL EXPECT THE PROJECT TO BE APPROVED.

SHORTLY AFTER THE FEBRUARY 28 ELECTION, THE US EMBASSY IN LONDON QUERIED A FOREIGN OFFICE OFFICIAL WHO SAID THAT THE NEW GOVERNMENT PROBABLY WOULD APPROVE THE DIEGO AGREEMENT WITHOUT ANY FUSS.

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